

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD

TO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 0950

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

C O N F I D E N T I A L L E N I N G R A D 0018

EO 11652GDS

TAGS: ACOM, ASEC, UR

SUBJ: CLASSIFIED POUCH EXCHANGES AT LENINGRAD

REF: LENINGRAD 1249

1. CONGEN WOULD APPRECIATE EMBASSY'S APPROACHING MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CONCERNING PERMISSION FOR CONGEN VEHICLE TO PROCEED DIRECTLY TO AIRCRAFT WHEN MAKING EXCHANGES OF CLASSIFIED POUCHES ON MONDAY FINNAIR FLIGHTS FROM HELSINKI. DIPLOMATIC AGENCY (LENINGRAD BRANCH OF MFA) HAS REFUSED TO GRANT SUCH PERMISSION AND, IN FOLLOW-UP REQUEST, MADE IT CLEAR THAT MATTER CONSIDERED BEYOND THEIR COMPETENCE.

2. BACKGROUND: REGULAR MONDAY AIRPORT EXCHANGES OF CLASSIFIED POUCHES WITH DIPLOMATIC COURIERS FREQUENTLY INVOLVE SUFFICIENT BULK AND WEIGHT TO REQUIRE CARRYING IN CARGO COMPARTMENT IN BELLY OF AIRCRAFT. CONGEN REQUESTED DIPLOMATIC AGENCY IN OUR DIPLOMATIC NOTE NUMBER 22 OF SEPTEMBER 11, 1974, TO AUTHORIZE CONGEN TO USE OFFICIAL CONGEN VEHICLE TO CONVEY OUTGOING POUCHES DIRECTLY TO AIRCRAFT, MAKE EXCHANGE, AND LOAD INCOMING POUCHES. ARGUMENT WAS BASED ON FACT THAT AIRPORT BAGGAGE FACILITIES FREQUENTLY UNAVAILABLE AND THAT LARGE AND BULKY POUCHES AWKWARD AND TIME-CONSUMING TO MOVE BY HAND, ESPECIALLY DURING INCLEMENT WEATHER. CONGEN'S NOTE ALSO MENTIONED THAT PRACTICE OF UTILIZING VEHICLE
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AT AIRCRAFT IS FOLLOWED BY EMBASSY AT MOSCOW AIRPORTS. ON

OCTOBER 22, DIPLOMATIC AGENCY REPLIED THAT AIR SAFETY FACTORS PRECLUDED USE OF CONGEN VEHICLE, AND THAT SOVIET VEHICLE COULD BE USED IF DIPLOMATIC POUCHES WERE TOO HEAVY OR BULKY. HOWEVER, CONGEN COURIERS HAVE YET TO BENEFIT FROM THIS MYTHICAL SOVIET VEHICLE AND, IN ANY EVENT, USE OF CONGEN VEHICLE IS PREFERABLE FROM STANDPOINT OF CONVENIENCE AND SECURITY. NOT WITHSTANDING OFFICIAL TURN-DOWN OF REQUEST, CONGEN COURIERS HAVE ON TWO OCCASIONS MANAGED TO SWEET TALK VARIOUS AIRPORT OFFICIALS INTO PERMITTING OUR TRUCK TO DRIVE TO AIRCRAFT. HOWEVER, THIS IS INADEQUATE AD HOC ARRANGEMENT SUBJECT TO WHIMS OF SOVIET OFFICIAL OF THE MOMENT. CONGEN ASKED DIPLOMATIC AGENCY AGAIN ON DECEMBER 12 TO REEXAMINE MATTER, BUT SOVIETS ONLY RECONFIRMED PREVIOUS DENIAL. THIS IS WHERE MATTER STANDS NOW.

3. ASIDE FROM CONVENIENCE ASPECT, THERE IS QUESTION OF POUCH SECURITY INVOLVED IN SEEKING AUTHORIZATION TO USE CONGEN VEHICLE (MOSCOW RSO HARVEY IS AWARE OF SITUATION). USE OF TRUCK WILL FACILITATE CONGEN COURIERS' KEEPING BAGGAGE COMPARTMENT IN VIEW UNTIL AIRCRAFT PREPARES TO TAXI AWAY FOR TAKE-OFF.

4. WE BELIEVE BEST APPROACH TO MFA WOULD BE COMMON SENSE LINE THAT MOSCOW PRACTICE SHOULD APPLY IN LENINGRAD FOR SIMILAR REASONS OF CONVENIENCE AND SECURITY. ALTHOUGH WE DO NOT WISH TO MAKE CASE ON RECIPROCITY FOR SOVIET PRIVILEGES IN SAN FRANCISCO, WHATEVER THEY MAY BE, IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO KNOW WHAT PROCEDURES/ COURTESIES SOVIET DIPLOMATIC COURIERS EXPERIENCE THERE.
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